

In the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark for determining the relative position between two or more layers of an integrated circuit structure comprising a first mark portion associated with a first layer and a second mark portion associated with a second layer, wherein the first and second mark portions together constitute, when the mark is properly aligned, at least one pair of test zones, each test zone comprising a first mark section formed as part of the first mark portion and a second mark section formed as part of the second mark portion each mark section comprising a plurality of elongate rectangular mark structures of equal length and in parallel array adjacently disposed to form the said test zone, the plurality of elongate rectangular mark structures of the first mark section and the plurality of elongate rectangular mark structures of the second mark section are positioned side by side in a direction that is perpendicular to a direction of measured displacement between the first mark section and the second mark section, such that the mark structures in a first each test zone are in alignment in a first direction within the test zone but are substantially at 90° with respect to the mark structures of at least one other test zone in alignment in a second direction, and wherein the test zones making up the at least one pair of test zones are laterally displaced relative to each other along at least one of the said directions a first direction and an orthogonal second direction by a distance great enough to avoid errors in measurement caused by proximity effects.
2. (Previously Presented) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 1 wherein the mark structures in each test zone are laterally disposed relative to each other such as in use to have mirror symmetry about an imaging axis of the imaging apparatus.
3. (Original) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 1 wherein each mark portion is developed within or on the said layer.
4. (Original) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 2 wherein each mark portion is printed on the said layer by a microlithographic process.

5. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 2 wherein each test zone has a generally square or rectangular outline shape, the axes of the square or rectangular shape directions corresponding to the said first and second directions and to the mirror axes of the imaging equipment in use.
6. (Original) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 5 wherein test zones are generally square.
7. (Withdrawn) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 1 wherein only two test zones are present, and wherein the first and second mark sections of the first zone comprise closely adjacent mark structures in parallel array in a common direction, respectively part of the first mark portion and the second mark portion, the first and second mark sections of the second zone comprise similar arrays but disposed at right angles thereto, and the two test zones are laterally spaced along a line which is parallel to the direction of the test structures in one zone, and perpendicular to the direction of the test structures in the other zone.
8. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 1 comprising more than one pair of test zones, wherein each pair is laterally disposed equidistantly about a common centre center in one or other of the said two directions.
9. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 8 comprising one a single such pair disposed in a first direction and another a single such pair in a second direction.
10. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 9 wherein the first and second mark sections of each zone comprise closely adjacent mark structures in parallel array in a common direction, respectively part of the first mark portion and the second mark portion, and wherein the first and second mark sections of two zones are in the first direction and the first and second mark sections of the other two zones in similar arrays but disposed at right angles thereto, and the two test zones in each pair are laterally spaced in respectively an X and Y direction about common centres centers.

11. (Previously presented) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 1 wherein the elongate rectangular mark structures comprise single monolithic rectangular structures.
12. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 8 1 wherein the elongate rectangular mark structures comprise arrangements of substructures constituting together a general elongate rectangular outline.
13. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 12 wherein the elongate rectangular mark structures comprises a row or column ~~as the case may be~~ of smaller constituent test structures, ~~for example a row or column of squares.~~
14. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 12 13 wherein each elongate rectangular test structure ~~and/or each constituent test structure comprise~~ comprises arrangements of design rule sized sub-structures.
15. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 14 wherein the arrangements of design rule sized sub-structures are selected from parallel arrays of elongate rectangular sub-structures in either direction, arrays of square sub-structures, circles in square or hexagonal array, arrays of holes within a suitably shaped test structure and any combinations of these ~~or other~~ like patterns.
16. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 1 wherein the pitch of the elongate rectangular mark structures is of constant period in each mark section.
17. (Original) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 16 wherein the period is identical in all mark sections.
18. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 16 wherein all elongate rectangular mark ~~test~~ structures in a test zone have identical widths and spacing.

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19. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 1 wherein each elongate rectangular mark test structure has a width of around 0.5 to 2 μm , and wherein spacing between elongate rectangular mark test structures in the array is between 1/2 and two structure widths.

20. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark in accordance with claim 19 wherein each mark section comprises at least five elongate rectangular mark test structures in each direction.

21. (Currently Amended) A method for providing an overlay metrology mark to determine the relative position between two or more layers of an integrated circuit structure comprises the steps of:

laying down a first mark portion in association with a first layer;
and laying down a second mark portion in association with a second layer;
the first and second mark portions being so structured as to together constitute, when the mark is properly aligned, at least one pair of test zones, each test zone comprising a first mark section formed as part of the first mark portion and a second mark section formed as part of the second mark portion each mark section comprising a plurality of elongate rectangular mark structures of equal length and in parallel array adjacently disposed to form the said test zone, the plurality of elongate rectangular mark structures of the first mark section and the plurality of elongate rectangular mark structures of the second mark section are positioned side by side in a direction that is perpendicular to a direction of measured displacement between the first mark section and the second mark section, such that the mark structures in each test zone are in alignment within the test zone, said alignment being in a first direction in half of the test zones and in a second direction substantially at 90° thereto in the other test zones, and wherein the test zones making up the at least one pair of test zones are laterally displaced relative to each other along at least one of the said directions first direction and said second direction by a distance great enough to avoid errors in measurement caused by proximity effects.

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Claims 22-25 (Cancelled).

26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the first and second mark portions are so structured as to together constitute, when the mark is properly aligned, more than one pair of test zones, wherein each pair is laterally disposed equidistantly about a common center centre in at least one or other of the said first and second two directions.
27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26, wherein the first and second mark sections of each test zone comprise closely adjacent mark structures in parallel array in a common direction, respectively part of the first mark portion and the second mark portion, and wherein the first and second mark sections of two zones are in the first direction and the first and second mark sections of the other two zones in similar arrays but disposed at right angles thereto, and the two test zones in each pair are laterally spaced in respectively an X and Y direction about common centres centers.
28. (Currently Amended) An overlay metrology mark for determining the relative position between two or more layers of an integrated circuit structure, the overlay metrology mark comprising at least a pair of test zones, the test zones being laterally displaced relative to each other by a distance great enough to avoid errors in measurement caused by proximity effects, each test zone comprising a first mark section formed on a first layer of the integrated circuit structure and a second mark section formed on a second layer of the integrated circuit structure, the second layer being disposed over the first layer, each of the mark sections comprising a plurality of parallel array of elongate rectangular mark structures of equal length, wherein when the overlay metrology mark is properly aligned the mark structures in the first mark section are parallel to and adjacently disposed to the mark structures in the second mark section and the long axis of each long axes of the rectangular mark structure structures of the first mark section is collinear with a long axis of a corresponding rectangular mark structure of and the second mark section structures are co-linear within each test zone and are perpendicular with respect to the rectangular mark structures in the other test zone.
29. (Currently Amended) The overlay metrology mark of claim 28, comprising four test zones, wherein the long axis of each axes of the rectangular mark structure structures of the first mark section is collinear with a long axis of each rectangular mark structure of and the second mark section structures are co-linear along a first direction in a first test zone and a

second test zone and are collinear ~~co-linear~~ along a second orthogonal direction in a third test zone and a fourth test zone.

30. (Previously Presented) The overlay metrology mark of claim 28, comprising four test zones, wherein a first test zone and a second test zone are aligned on an axis along a first direction and are separated by a distance that is approximately equal to a total length of the rectangular mark structures in both the first mark section and the second mark section of a third test zone, and wherein the third test zone and a fourth test zone are aligned on an axis along a second direction that is orthogonal to the first direction and are separated by a distance that is approximately equal to a total length of the rectangular mark structures in both the first mark section and the second mark section of the first test zone.

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